The Sela Tunnel – Importance and the strategic edge it promises

Why in news?

The strategically-significant Sela Tunnel project in Arunachal Pradesh is nearing completion.

What is Arunachal's Sela tunnel project?

- The Sela tunnel was announced by the government in 2018.
- It is a part of the Balipara-Charduar-Tawang road, one of the key strategic projects near the Chinese border.
- It is located in the West Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh.
- The project is being executed by the Border Roads Organisation,
- This will be the longest twin-lane tunnel above 13,000 feet in the world.
- The project includes two tunnels and a link road.
    - Tunnel 1 is 980m long
    - Tunnel 2 which is 1555m long is a twin tube tunnel.
    - Tunnel 2 has one bi-lane tube for traffic and one escape tube for emergencies.
    - The link road between the two tunnels will be 1,200 metres.
- Tunnels longer than 1500 m needs to have to have an escape passage alongside.
- The total length of the project, including the tunnels, the approach and the link roads, will be around 12 km.
- The tunnels are coming up through two ridges west of Sela.

Why is it so significant?

- It will cut down travel time to from Tezpur to Tawang by at least one hour as well as provide all-weather connectivity.
- At the moment, Sela pass stays closed for a few winter months due to winter and heavy snowfall.
- This poses serious logistics challenge for both military and civil vehicles.
- Now faster deployment of weapons and soldiers to the Line of Actual Control and forward areas in the Tawang sector can be made.
- Once the tunnel is ready, the road will remain open for 12 months of the year.
- The local population of Tawang will no longer get cut off from the mainland

Reference

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2. https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/sela-tunnel-project-to-be-completed-by-yearend-101652639310065.html

